

Judah During the Divided Kingdom (2 Chronicles 10:1 – 28:7)

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<p>The Reign of Jehoshaphat, part 3: Jehoshaphat's Later Years, part 1: Jehoshaphat's Later Fidelity (2 Chronicles 19:4-11)</p>
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Jehoshaphat's Later Years (19:4-20:30)

At this point the Chronicler turned to the second half of his record of Jehoshaphat's reign. His record includes other acts of fidelity (19:4-11) and a second battle (20:1-30).

Comparison of 19:4-20:30 with Kings

This entire section is without parallel in the book of Kings. The Chronicler added this material to balance the first half of Jehoshaphat's reign (see figure 35).

Later Fidelity (19:4-11)

The Chronicler began this portion with another record of the king's reforms. These changes also extended throughout his kingdom.

Structure of 19:4-11

This account divides into a title followed by two main sections (see figure 35). The Chronicler first gave a summary for the section (19:4). He then offered reports on Jehoshaphat's work outside Jerusalem (19:5-7) and within the vicinity of Jerusalem (19:8-11).

Jehoshaphat's Extensive Reforms (19:4)

Jehoshaphat began these reforms by going out **again among the people** (19:4). This expression does not necessarily imply that the king personally went about the country. In

fact, the term **again** suggests that the Chronicler meant that the king sent representatives throughout the land as he had done beforehand (see 17:7).

The emphasis of this verse is on the extent of Jehoshaphat's influence. His efforts reached **from Beersheba to the hill country of Ephraim** (19:4). In his usual style, the Chronicler's geographical notice moved from the South to the North (see comments on 1 Chr 21:2). The northward limits of this geographical designation fell far short of the traditional "Dan" because Jehoshaphat only controlled those northern territories which he had conquered earlier (see 13:4; 15:8). Nevertheless, the king's reforms extended to the limits of his kingdom including the northern territories (see *Introduction: 2 Northern Israel*).

The Chronicler reported that Jehoshaphat **turned** [his citizens] **back to the Lord** (19:4). Popular religious practices continued to be less than ideal during Jehoshaphat's reign (see 20:33), but at this point the king attempted to bring the entire population into conformity with the Law of God. Similar widespread reforms took place at other times (see *Introduction: 6 Royal Observance of Worship*).

Judicial Reforms Outside Jerusalem (19:5-7)

Having established the general topic of this section, the Chronicler proceeded to illustrate how Jehoshaphat tried to bring about reform. He dealt first with the king's actions **in each of the fortified cities of Judah** (19:5). This record deals first with the king's appointments (19:5) and then with his instructions (19:6-7).

Appointments Outside Jerusalem (19:5)

Jehoshaphat **appointed judges** throughout his kingdom (19:5). In patriarchal times, the heads of families and tribal elders performed the functions of judges (see Gen 38:24). Under Moses' leadership, judges were selected from the tribes to make rulings in less complicated cases while leaving more difficult cases for Moses himself (see Exod 18:13-26). In the days of the Judges, local authorities ruled in disputes (e.g. Deborah, Gideon). David and Solomon established local courts to hear cases (see 1 Chr 23:4; 26:29). Jehoshaphat reordered the court system of Judah so the Law could be more effectively enforced in his times.

Instructions Outside Jerusalem (19:6-7)

The appointment of judges did not insure justice in Judah's courts. Bribery and deceit constantly plagued the judicial system of Judah and Israel. For this reason the Old Testament frequently warned judges and kings against accepting bribes and favoring the rich (see Ex

23:6-8; Deut 1:17; 16:18-20; Ps 15:5; Prov 17:23; Mic 3:11; 7:3). Jehoshaphat was aware of this difficulty and appropriately charged his judges.

The king's instructions amount to two commands followed by explanations. First, the judges were to **consider carefully** their duties (19:6). The reason for this care is that they were not working **for man but for the Lord** (19:6). Jehoshaphat made it clear that these judges worked neither for him, nor for the nation. Moreover, God intended to be **with** them (19:6), giving them strength against all opposition (see *Introduction: 10) Divine Activity*). Their duty was a sacred service to God. For this reason, the king warned them that they must **fear the Lord** (19:7a).

Second, Jehoshaphat commanded his appointees to **judge carefully** (19:7b). His explanation of this order rested on the character of the God whom these judges served. God allowed **no injustice, partiality or bribery** in his judgments (19:7c). Here the king depended on long-standing Old Testament beliefs about the justice of the divine Judge (see Gen 18:25; Ex 18:16; Deut 1:17; 10:17; Job 8:3; Ps 9:16; 11:7; 89:14; 99:4). Jehoshaphat's judges were to reflect the character of the heavenly Judge whom they represented.

Judicial Reforms Within Jerusalem (19:8-11)

Having reported Jehoshaphat's national judicial reforms, the Chronicler narrowed his view to Jehoshaphat's reform efforts **in Jerusalem** (19:8). This material also contains judicial appointments followed by instructions.

Appointments Within Jerusalem (19:8)

The Chronicler noted that the king established **Levites, priests and heads of Israelite families** to serve as judges (19:8). It is likely that the same groups of appointees were to be understood in the preceding passage (see 19:5-7). Whatever the case, the parallel between these events and those of Jehoshaphat's earlier acts of obedience is evident (see 17:8-9). David and Solomon had both ordained levitical family members to serve as judges (see 1 Chr 23:4; 2 Chr 1:2). Jehoshaphat followed well-established precedents (see also Ezk 44:24).

Instructions Within Jerusalem (19:9-11)

Once again, Jehoshaphat instructed his newly appointed judges. His instructions fell into four main categories. First, these men were to fulfill their tasks **faithfully and wholeheartedly in the fear of the Lord** (19:9). The Chronicler's ideal of sincerity and devotion from the heart

was to characterize these men (see *Introduction: 16) Motivations*). Moreover, reverence for God is mentioned again as a central feature of the judges' service (see 19:7).

Second, in all their activities the judges were to warn the people **not to sin** (19:8). Upholding the Law of God was their principle task. Jehoshaphat explained that without the judges' instruction in the Law, "**wrath will come on you and your brothers**" (19:8). The king knew that only obedience to the Law would bring divine blessing. For this reason, he insisted that the Law be taught.

Third, Jehoshaphat established a hierarchy among the judges. **Amariah the chief priest** would have charge of **any matter concerning the Lord** (19:11). **Zebadiah ... the leader of the tribe of Judah** would have charge over **any matter concerning the king** (19:11). The Chronicler reported similar distinctions in one other place (see 1 Chr 26:30,32). The precise differences between matters of the king and the Lord are not altogether clear. They do not correspond precisely to church/state divisions in contemporary nation-states because both spheres of authority were regarded as under the rule of Israel's religious beliefs. The difference appears to be between those matters related more directly to the temple and its services as opposed to matters more closely connected to Israel's statecraft. The fact that the Chronicler focused on this difference suggests that such matters may have been somewhat controversial in his day. In his view, both royal and priestly interests were to be maintained within legal arrangements of the post-exilic community.

Fourth, the king closed his instructions with an encouragement. He exhorted the judges to **act with courage** (19:11). Enforcing the Law of God would not be an easy task among a people prone to injustice and sin. He also wished blessings on those judges **who do well** (19:11). Divine rewards were in store for the judges who performed their tasks as they should.

Jehoshaphat's judicial reforms had many implications for the post-exilic readers of Chronicles. As they sought to rebuild the kingdom of Israel, Jehoshaphat's actions demonstrated the importance of re-establishing a judiciary throughout the land. Along these lines, Ezra was commissioned to return to Jerusalem precisely because he was an expert in the Law (Ezr 7:6,10). Jehoshaphat's actions exemplified the importance of the Law's enforcement in post-exilic Israel (see *Introduction: 14) Standards*).